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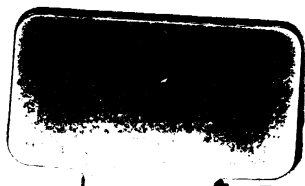
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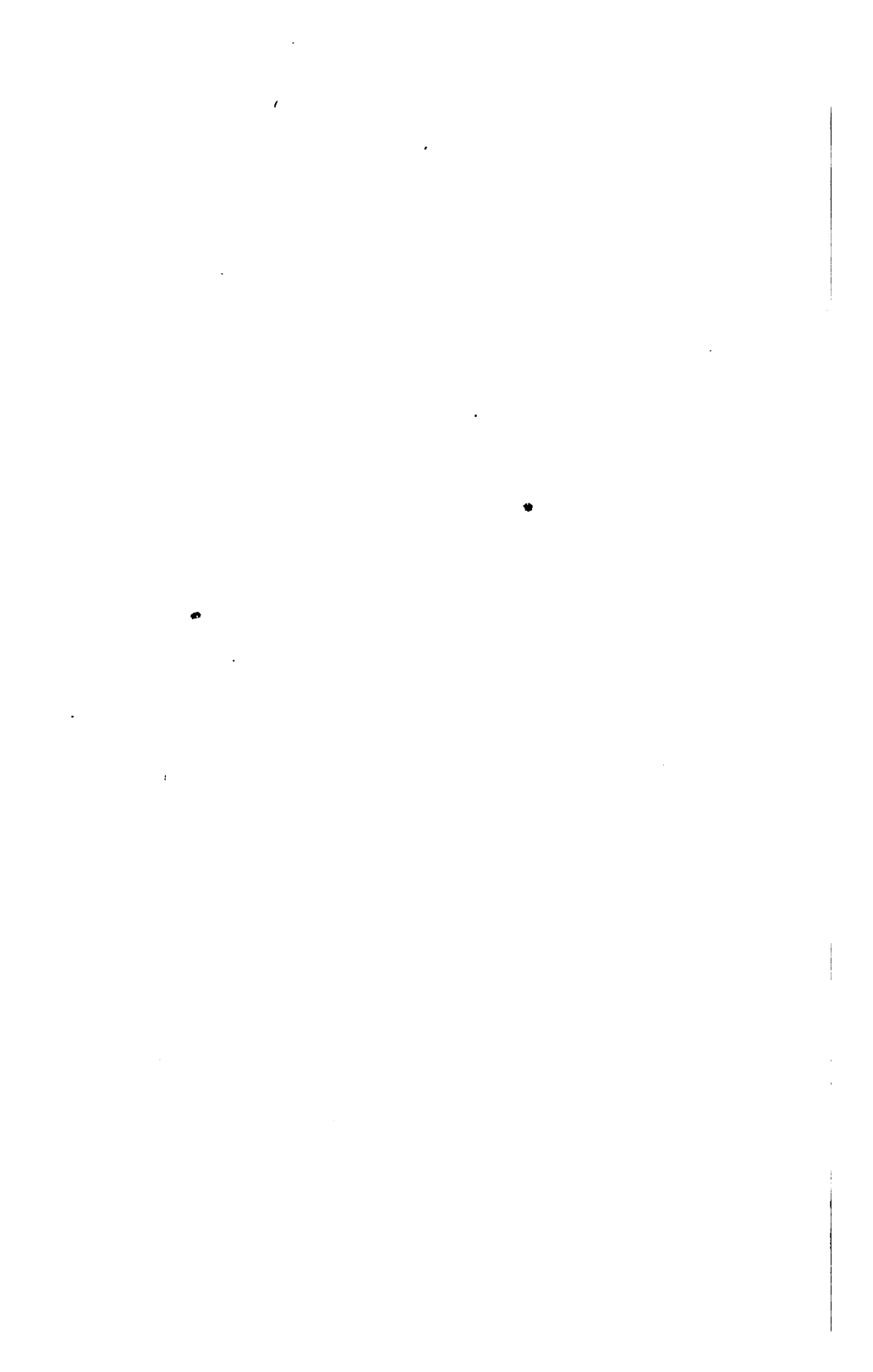
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A SHORT REVIEW
OF
The Reports
OF THE
AFRICAN INSTITUTION,
AND OF THE
CONTROVERSY WITH DR. THORPE,
WITH
SOME REASONS
AGAINST
THE REGISTRY OF SLAVES
IN THE
British Colonies.

By GILBERT MATHISON, Esq.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author of the following pages had long felt an anxious desire to see bettered the condition of the black population of our West India Islands; and, with a view to the accomplishment of that important object, had, some years ago, contributed his mite by the publication of a pamphlet, entitled "Notices respecting Jamaica," in which the subject was freely canvassed "without favour to the enthusiasm nor fear of the prejudices of any person," and various methods pointed out, which, according to his view of the subject, might be mutually advantageous to master and slave. He did hope, sooner or later, to discover that he had thus laid the foundation of progressive good. He has now the satisfaction to think that his labours have not been misapplied; and he has

the confidence at the same time to believe, that, if the spirit of his work had had more general and extensive influence, some part of the pretence, though no part of the motive, for a violent innovation might have been prevented.

He never will cease to afford his hearty co-operation, by all safe, rational, and constitutional methods; but he cannot silently allow his name to be coupled in any shape with a project, which, whatever may be the real motives for bringing it before Parliament, does nothing less than aim a deadly blow at the fundamental principles of the colonial system.

Whatever may be said of the *abstract right* of the legislative body of this kingdom to interpose in any form, or at any time, to shift its line of policy with respect to the colonies, or even to subvert the fabric raised with the sanction of successive administrations, during a course of one hundred and fifty years, he can safely deny the *moral right* of Parliament in this case, and as confidently deny the existence of a *true sterling feeling* in the *attempt* to accomplish the enfranchisement of the negro, *at any period*, by the

disfranchisement of a most valuable body of British subjects, who have established themselves, under the encouragement of British Law, and the protection and security of a Constitutional Charter, in the West India Islands.

Sincere an advocate as he is for the diffusion of the blessings of civilized life and of rational freedom over the surface of the whole world, he is yet no citizen of the world' in so extensive a sense as to wish to promote the happiness of other nations, either barbarous or civilized, by debasing the political condition of any class of British subjects, and the author of "*Reasons for establishing a Registry of Slaves in the British Colonies*,"* has done him no more than justice in stating that his views were disclosed "for a different practical purpose."

He had nothing in view but the improvement of the condition of the negro subject, by *straight forward* means, by the fair operation of a principle, developed by the abolition law, which, when

* See *Reasons for establishing a Registry*, p. 17, Note.

properly set in action, could not fail, as he conceived, to produce the most happy result, namely, the identity of interest, in a moral sense, between master and slave, by which the former must, by a sort of re-action, be benefited by every act of well-judged benevolence towards the slave, and the latter be gradually qualified by a course of moral, religious, and intellectual improvement, for a well-digested and rational freedom, which might at any time be conferred on him by the indulgence of his master for faithful conduct or valuable services: a most interesting and important contemplation, which, however interesting and important it may be, seems to fall very short of the "practical purpose" kept in view by the leading directors of the African Institution.

In one sense it would be difficult to over-rate the public services of the body of dissenters of different sects; for, by the successful efforts of their zeal, they have, at last, awakened the slumbering zeal of the professional members of the established church, and by an indirect operation as well as by positive charitable institutions, have

given a most useful impulse to the work of moral and intellectual improvement among the lower orders of society throughout the United Kingdoms.

Whether the duty of religious instruction should be undertaken in the West India Islands by the ministers of the Church of England, or by missionary preachers, is a question which admits of an easy solution, and might be best answered by reverting to the old worn out arguments in favour of the established national church, which, happily for the interests of humanity, have long been set at rest. But there is one consideration, which must have a powerful influence on the minds of the colonial assemblies, and that is, a consideration of the duty of self-preservation as it regards both their lives and property.

Every minister of the established church is a known acknowledged character ; his moral principles, his religious doctrines, his qualification in every sense as a teacher of the Gospel, either are or may be known by the Bishop within whose jurisdiction the West India Islands lie. On the contrary, who is to define the character or qualifications of a missionary or itinerant preacher ? He

may or may not be a most benevolent personage, with the spirit of true charity diffused throughout his life and preachings ; he may or may not be a contemptible hypocrite of the lowest class, with benevolence on his lips, and the blackest passions predominant in his heart ; he may or may not be a visionary enthusiast, and, with the best intentions, though without common sense, ready to set fire, by his dangerous experiments, to the combustible materials collected in that corner of the world.

There cannot be a better or more powerful instrument than Christianity, in the hands of judicious reflecting ministers, for promoting the work of civilization wherever it may be required. Neither can there be a more mischievous instrument in the hands of designing demagogues, who, under the mask of extraordinary sanctity, may mean to disseminate the most poisonous political opinions. In this country such mischiefs find an easy antidote in the good sense and positive intellectual condition of the mass of the people ; but in the West India Islands, where the mass of the black population still continues in a state of the grossest

ignorance, who can calculate the evil influence which may be obtained over their minds by the art and ingenuity of hypocritical incendiaries ?

The necessity of discouraging undefined and indefinable itinerant preachers has been fully appreciated both in theory and from experience, by some of the colonial assemblies, and they have very properly attempted to discourage them by legislative enactments. These assemblies are of opinion that the Bishop of London, and not the missionary preacher, is the regular, and safe, and effectual channel for promoting christian knowledge ; and they trust, no doubt, that the same energy, which has been roused in this kingdom, will soon extend itself for the dissemination of true Church of England doctrines and discipline among the slaves of the West India Islands. But if the views of the leading Directors of the African Institution are directed to an opposite " practical purpose," they not only differ, *toto cælo*, from the views of the author of " Notices on Jamaica," (a point which, except as it regards himself, is of no possible signification) but will probably be disapproved of by the bench of Bishops and all

true Church of England members of both Houses of Parliament.

To clear the subject of some incumbrances, as well as to prevent any misapplication of his opinions, he has been led reluctantly to appear before the tribunal of the public in the shape, though with few, if any, of the necessary qualifications of a Reviewer, except impartiality and the love of truth.

REVIEW, &c.

THERE is something so very repugnant to our nature in the idea of the slavery of the human species, that we could not fail to hail the Act for abolishing the Slave Trade as one of the most important benefits conferred by parliament on mankind within the range of our recollection; whether it be considered as a step to the immediate improvement or gradual enfranchisement of a very interesting class of fellow-creatures. And it was natural that we should view, with a corresponding degree of satisfaction, the establishment of an Association set on foot for the express purpose of bettering the condition of the people of Africa, who, for a long course of years, had been outraged

by a train of evils of no common magnitude. This might be some reparation for past enormities. The civilization of Africa had always been a leading point in the contemplation of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company; but, as long as the Slave Trade was authorized by law, all their efforts were paralyzed by it, and it naturally became the immediate care of the African Institution to exterminate every trace of a trade, which, as long as it should be carried on, in any shape or degree, must tend to cramp, if not to defeat, their meritorious endeavours to benefit the condition of the human race in this quarter of the globe.

The objects of this Association are comprised in certain resolutions agreed to and stated in their First Report, which we shall transcribe at length, as best exhibiting the principles which seemed to influence the leading persons employed in the formation of the establishment.

“1. That this Meeting is deeply impressed with a sense of the enormous wrongs which the natives of Africa have suffered in their intercourse with Europe; and from

a desire to repair these wrongs, as well as from general feelings of benevolence, is anxious to adopt such measures as are best calculated to promote their civilization and happiness.

“ 2. That the approaching cessation of the Slave Trade hitherto carried on by Great Britain, America, and Denmark, will, in a considerable degree, remove the barrier, which has so long obstructed the natural course of improvement in Africa; and that the way will be thereby opened for introducing the comforts and arts of a more civilized state of society.

“ 3. That the happiest effects may be reasonably anticipated from diffusing useful knowledge and exciting industry among the inhabitants of Africa, and from obtaining and circulating throughout this country more ample and authentic information concerning the agricultural and commercial facilities of that vast continent; and that through the judicious prosecution of these benevolent endeavours, we may ultimately look forward to the establishment, in the room of that traffic by which Africa has

been so long degraded, of a legitimate and far more extended commerce, beneficial alike to the natives of Africa, and to the manufacturers of Great Britain and Ireland.

“ 4. That the present period is eminently fitted for prosecuting these benevolent designs; since the suspension, during the war, of that large share of the Slave Trade, carried on by France, Spain, and Holland, will, when combined with the effect of the abolition laws of Great Britain, America, and Denmark, produce nearly the entire cessation of that traffic along a line of coast, extending between two and three thousand miles in length, and thereby afford a peculiarly favourable opportunity of giving a new direction to the industry and commerce of Africa.

“ 5. That, *for these purposes*, a Society be immediately formed, to be called ‘ *The African Institution.*’ ”

The Report then very properly goes on, —“ To prevent misconception concerning the views and measures of the African Institution, it may be proper, in the first instance, to declare that it is the Society’s

fixed determination not to undertake any religious missions, nor to engage in commercial speculations.

“ It may also be proper to premise, that it will naturally become the duty and care of this Society to watch over the execution of the laws recently enacted in this and other countries, abolishing the African Slave Trade; to endeavour to prevent the infraction of those laws; and, from time to time, to suggest any means by which they may be rendered more effectual to their objects; and likewise to endeavour, by communicating information, and by other appropriate methods, to promote the abolition of the Slave Trade by foreign powers.

“ The means which it is proposed to employ for the purpose of promoting civilization and improvement in Africa are of the following kind:—

“ 1. To collect and diffuse, throughout this country, accurate information respecting the natural productions of Africa, and, in general, respecting the agricultural and commercial capacities of the African con-

continent, and the intellectual, moral, and political, condition of its inhabitants.

“ 2. To promote the instruction of the Africans in letters and in useful knowledge, and to cultivate a friendly connection with the natives of that continent.

“ 3. To endeavour to enlighten the minds of the Africans with respect to their true interests; and to diffuse information amongst them respecting the means whereby we may improve the present opportunity of substituting a beneficial commerce in place of the Slave Trade.

“ 4. To introduce among them such of the improvements and useful arts of Europe as are suited to their condition.

“ 5. To promote the cultivation of the African soil, not only by exciting and directing the industry of the natives, but by furnishing, where it may appear advantageous to do so, useful seeds and plants, and implements of husbandry.

“ 6. To introduce amongst the inhabitants beneficial medical discoveries.

“ 7. To obtain a knowledge of the principal languages in Africa, and, as has been

already found to be practicable, to reduce them to writing, with a view to facilitate the diffusion of information among the natives of that country.

“ 8. To employ suitable agents, and to establish correspondencies as shall appear advisable; and to encourage and reward individual enterprize and exertion in promoting any of the purposes of the Institution.”

Under the confidence inspired by a long list of respectable names, large sums of money have been periodically collected; and the Institution has carried on its measures from the year 1807 to the present time; without hindrance, without suspicion, with growing zeal and unabated perseverance, always professing to aim at the attainment of a point, which was stated in their resolutions to be the improvements of the condition of the human race on the continent of Africa.

At last, however, their proceedings have been attacked by a gentleman, who for some time filled a high official situation in Sierra Leone, who was an eye-witness of

the state of affairs in that colony, who had opportunities of learning the history and transactions from the best authority, and whose testimony cannot be passed over unconsidered by us without great injustice (not to Dr. Thorpe, but) to the public, whose servants we profess to be, and whose cause Dr. Thorpe professes to advocate.

The merits and demerits of the African Institution are thus brought before the tribunal of the public. Dr. Thorpe has stood forward with no inconsiderable degree of hardihood as their accuser, or rather as the accuser of their *leading* members; he has arraigned the purity of their motives; he has denied the accuracy of their printed statements, and has raised strong grounds of doubt of the wisdom of trusting too confidently to private character for faithful management of the temporal affairs of the world.

We shall endeavour to sift this subject with impartiality, neither trusting to the assertions of the accuser, without a sufficient weight of evidence, nor, on the other hand, giving way too much to habi-

tual partiality towards respected individuals; always remembering that in large associations all will not be found equally pure; that ambition, commercial rivalry, political power, certain imaginary influences, either separable from or combined with benignant feelings, too often mislead mankind from the straight path of common sense and moral rectitude. These are considerations which always make us very cautious in bending too implicitly to the authority of mere names; and we confess we were not a little startled at seeing an appeal to such authority on the part of the respectable author of the *Special Report*, who ought to know that the *argumentum ad hominem* is always considered as one of the weakest of all arguments, and only fit to be employed by those who fail in plain sense and fair reasoning.

“The pamphlet of Dr. Thorpe,” says the *Special Report* (p. 3), “commences with an attack on the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, whose conduct, and even whose motives, he arraigns in the strongest and most unqualified terms.

In justice to that body, it may be proper to specify who were the individuals composing it. The chairman and *leading member* of it from the first institution to its final dissolution was Mr. Henry Thornton, who is well known to have devoted a large portion of his time, and the powers of his active, discriminating, and upright mind to the superintendence of its concerns.

“The Deputy Chairmen were successively Philip Sandom, Esq. Charles Grant, Esq. now Chairman of the East India Company, and Lord Teignmouth. Sir Charles Middleton, afterwards Lord Barham; Admiral Sir George Young, and Thomas Clarkson, Esq. were efficient Directors until they quitted London; and the Hon. James Elliot, to the time of his death. Besides these, the following gentlemen were in the direction during *almost* the whole period of the Company’s existence: W. Wilberforce, Esq. M. P. Thomas Babington, Esq. M. P. Thomas F. Forster, Esq. Joseph Hardcastle, Esq. John Inglis, Esq. John Kingston, Esq. Samuel Parker, Esq. E. Parry, Esq. John Prinsiss, Esq. and Granville Sharpe.

“ The various statements which have been laid before Parliament, on the subject of Sierra Leone, were drawn up and sanctioned by these well-known and distinguished characters, whom it is unnecessary to defend from the imputation of either having practised a deception on the public, or of having been actuated by corrupt and improper motives.”

“ The reports and statements of these individuals may be referred to as completely negating the charges and imputations of Mr. Thorpe; and as Mr. Thorpe did not visit the colony until three years and a half after the Company had ceased to govern it, and his residence there continued only for twenty-one months, namely, from July 1811, to March 1813; his testimony cannot be regarded as of much moment, *when thus opposed*. Whatever credit may be due to his testimony, when speaking of things within the sphere of his observation, yet of what passed during the Sierra Leone Company's administration of the colony, he could have no personal knowledge. His representations, therefore, loose and

vague as they are, can hardly be allowed to weigh materially against the *deliberate and recorded statements* of the gentlemen who have been named, themselves actors in the business, and possessing full access to every official document, and to the best sources of oral information."

And again (p. 57), "The Directors of the Sierra Leone Company," Mr. Thorpe states, on the surrender of the colony to government, "'formed (*to uphold their old influence*) a Society called the African Institution.'" It will not be very easy for Mr. Thorpe to persuade the public that the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, *whose names have been already mentioned*, could have any 'selfish' end in contributing to form the African Institution."

Now we do think that Dr. Thorpe must be a very stupid or a very indolent sort of man, if, during a residence of twenty-one months, filling, as he did, a high official situation, and living with the most intelligent individuals of a very small community, many of whom had been established in the colony from the earliest period, he

had not had access to authentic documents, and the best sources of oral information. We do not think this objection to the testimony of Dr. Thorpe can be allowed to have any weight when the authority of Governor Thompson is relied on in another place by the author of the Special Report, though he had only resided *eight months* in the colony. Dr. Thorpe himself says, "From January 1808, when I was appointed, I read every publication I could find either from the directors or respecting the conduct pursued by their servants. I endeavoured to acquire knowledge from every person I could reach, who had been in the colony; I examined into the state of the colony when I arrived; I interrogated the oldest and most intelligent settlers on every particular occurrence for eighteen years; searched the records of the Vice-Admiralty Court, and the file of affidavits; sought from the neighbouring chieftains and the persons who had resided near the colony, every possible information, and heard the evidence given on oath in civil causes before myself."

In point of fact he has shewn himself to be intimately acquainted with the history and transactions of the colony from the earliest period : he has employed his knowledge, however acquired, to make some very important disclosures : he has falsified some of the deliberate and recorded statements of his opponents, which could not have been accomplished without better materials and higher authority than the author of the Special Report is disposed to allow him to possess. Indeed, turning, as we do, from the perusal of a very important document, published in Dr. Thorpe's Appendix, of which he certainly has not made too much use, we are compelled to complain of a great want of candour in this attempt to throw discredit upon his authority.

With an equal degree of candour has the author of the Special Report denied the identity of the Sierra Leone Company with the African Institution. "In truth," he says, "the *only* directors of that company, whose names are to be found in the list of the directors of the African Institution, be-

sides those of the ever to be lamented Mr. Henry Thornton and Mr. Granville Sharpe, are Lord Teignmouth, Mr. Charles Grant, Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. Babington, Mr. J. F. Forster, and Mr. Clarkson." But these persons formed only a small proportion of the managing body, which consists of a president, twenty-two vice-presidents, a treasurer, and thirty-eight directors. There was not, therefore, between the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company and the African Institution the *identity* which Mr. Thorpe affirms to have existed.

We cannot venture to affirm that there is a complete identity in point of names on the face of the list of directors. But when we see the old Board of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company embodied, excepting only two or three names, with the Board of Directors of the African Institution ; the chairman of the former becoming the treasurer of the latter ; the late acting Governor of the colony under the old regime becoming the secretary of the new association here ; the mild spirit and active talents of Mr. Wilberforce, accompanied

by the same "select" set of individuals, *still* taking *the lead*, and very properly directing, as almost exclusively understanding, the affairs of Africa, we must be allowed to assume the fact of identity between the two establishments; notwithstanding the appearance of a few additional new names, they satisfy the author of the Special Report that he commits no inaccuracy in denying it.

With as much shew of reason and with the same degree of candour might be denied the identity of the Church Missionary Society with the African Institution, though we have the authority of a most striking passage in the Special Report in affirmation of this identity; a passage which at once serves to disprove the strange assertion in page 57 of the Special Report, and to amalgamate, as it were, the whole of these associations. — "Mr. Thorpe could hardly have been ignorant that in addition to any attempts, which have been made by the African Institution in the work of direct instruction, attempts necessarily limited by the fundamental rule which pre-

vented the employment of missionaries and by the low state of its funds, much has been attempted and even effected in this way by other societies, and particularly by the Church Missionary Society for missions to Africa and the East. Of this society, the very persons whom Mr. Thorpe most vehemently attacks as unfriendly to the interests of Africa, namely, the late chairman of the Sierra Leone Company, Mr. Henry Thornton, Mr. Wilberforce, and Mr. Macaulay, it appears, were among the founders; and from its institution in 1800 they have also been among its most strenuous supporters as well as *most active managers; besides whom, twelve noblemen and gentlemen are managers alike of both institutions.*"

We do not mean to enter minutely into the transactions of the Sierra Leone Company, nor into the controversy between Dr. Thorpe and his opponents; in which we find, as we generally find in other similar cases, too much irrelevant personality as well as too much assertion without evidence on both sides. We shall therefore confine our strictures to main points, re-

ferring the reader for further information to the several publications, which are now the subject of our consideration, and which, notwithstanding a certain air of contempt very carefully thrown upon the character of Dr. Thorpe, are well worthy of the most serious and attentive perusal of impartial readers.

Having denied the identity with, the Directors of the African Institution proceed to defend the measures of, the Sierra Leone Company; and, whatever may be said of the conduct of subordinate agents during the progress of the settlement, we sincerely agree in expressing a deep impression of the laudable and disinterested views which *first* led to the formation of it. We cannot, however, pass many encomiums on the practical good sense displayed by the Directors in the attempt to rear this child of experiment; the failure will afford the best criterion of their merit, which is attributable, it is said, to the following causes, all of which a little sagacity might have foreseen, and most of which a little common sense might have corrected:—

1. The want of sufficient power and authority in the government of the colony during the first *eight years*.

2. The unfavourable character of the settlers.

3. The insufficiency of its force to check the natives.

4. The unhealthiness incident to all new settlements in tropical climates.

5. The inexperience of the conductors of the undertaking in the earlier period of the settlement.

6. The long continuance of the war.

7. The Slave Trade.

These are the causes enumerated by the author of the Special Report to account for the failure of this colony ; to which we shall add a few more causes, less insisted upon, but more powerfully operating, collected by us from the same authority.

1. The establishment of a settlement in the midst of savage nations, *without forts* for its protection. Hence the colony was frequently threatened, and twice actually attacked by the natives ; hence the audacity of the African chiefs, who, when culti-

vation flourished, first drew away the native labourers, and then drove the settlers from their farms; hence a free scope for the exercise of the policy of the natives, who kept the colony in a state of disquietude and alarm.

2. The peculiar *unfitness* of the main body of the people to persevere, under the difficulties of a new settlement.

3. *Bad faith in the distribution of land to the Nova Scotians*; hence insurrections and continued turbulence.

4. *Ignorance of the peculiar features of the negro character.*

5. The extreme *indolence of the settlers*, which afforded an insuperable barrier to the successful cultivation of the land.

This statement needs no commentary: for a grosser case of incapacity, mismanagement, and ignorance, was never yet inferred from a base exposition of facts; which, if rightly appreciated, might afford, one would think, a pregnant lesson of caution in allowing the same set of persons, under whatever denomination, to meddle with the internal administration

of affairs in any other well-established colony.

As the charge, however, of bad faith towards the Nova Scotians is denied *totidem verbis* by the Directors of the African Institution, we feel it an incumbent duty to enter more particularly into that question.—“ Mr. Thorpe,” says the Special Report, “ charges the Sierra Leone Company with failing in their engagements to the Nova Scotian settlers.”

The facts of the case seem to be these: To encourage these persons to transfer themselves from Nova Scotia to this infant colony, Mr. Clarkson in 1792, had promised *twenty* acres of land to each man, *ten* acres to each woman, and *five* acres to each child. With the just expectation of receiving this allotment of territory, they were landed at Sierra Leone and received *one-fifth part*, and no more, of the promised allotment; and this, according to the modest expostulation of the Nova Scotians, in their petition to the Directors, was not “ *good land*.” “ The settlers remonstrated in vain,” says Mr. Thorpe, “ then

ensued an insurrection." This was the natural and more immediate effect. Then the negro, no doubt, became distrustful, indifferent, and sulky; this was the natural and durably-mischievous effect. "The remaining *four-fifths* have been repeatedly offered," says the Special Report, "but the offer has been, for obvious reasons,* generally declined." "The *right*, however, to the remaining four-fifths of the quantity of land originally promised, was carefully preserved to the Nova Scotians. *This was stipulated for by the Sierra Leone Company*, and agreed to by His Majesty's Government, when the transfer of the colony to the crown was negotiated." This they stipulated for at the expiration of *sixteen years!* "Yet," they say, "for this charge there does not appear to be any just foundation; on the contrary, the Company appears to have acted with a *scrupulous* attention to their engagements to this body of people"!!†

* These reasons should be explained.

† The Special Report says, "Not above three or four applications grounded upon it, appear to have been made to the colonial government." Page 15.—Dr. Thorpe says, "Almost

On this point we conceive Dr. Thorpe has stated a clear unanswerable charge of bad faith against the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company; and we believe we know enough of the negro character to be justified in pronouncing that this fatal error, committed at the first establishment, must have become a prevailing cause of their ill success during the whole of their administration of the colony.

“The most serious, however,” says the Special Report, “of all Dr. Thorpe’s accusations against the Sierra Leone Company and their agents, is that of Slave Trading. But, in proportion to its seriousness, it appears to have, if possible, still less foundation whereon to rest than any that has yet been adverted to.”

A most serious accusation, most certainly this is; an accusation of offence so enormous as to have required the greatest degree of

every surviving Nova Scotian, his wife or children, did apply, even before they had sufficient dollars to pay the fees for obtaining the grant.” Thorpe’s Reply, p. 9.—Did not the whole of them apply by petition, at the time land was most wanted, and was not the petition rejected?

delicacy and caution on the part of the accuser, and the completest and most unequivocal refutation on the part of the accused. Yet Dr. Thorpe has introduced it with a flippancy and conciseness very little suited to the heinousness of the offence; and has drawn an inference to the discredit of the *Directors*, which, we conceive, is by no means borne out, nor even justified, by the circumstances of the case, as stated in the letter to Mr. Wilberforce. But, as the developement of this passage in the transactions of the colony may afford a lesson of great practical utility to those who may be called upon to support or to controul the enterprizes of the leading Members of the African Institution, we feel a double motive for dwelling more particularly on this section of the controversy.

“Lastly,” says Dr. Thorpe, (p 5.) “*their servants* constantly *purchased* the natives; worked them themselves without pay, and hired them to others for pay; suffered slaves to be brought in and taken out of the colony; allowed them to be seized and delivered to their masters when they sought

protection; permitted their store-keepers to supply the slave factories, slave ships, and to feed the trade in every possible way. Even in Mr. Ludlam's last administration of the government, two cargoes of slaves, taken from the Americans, were publicly sold at *twenty dollars* a head. So much for their efforts to repress the Slave Trade, of which they had professed such an abhorrence and which the Act of Parliament for incorporating the Company forbade them to pursue. Is it possible the directors did not know, hear, or believe, this, or any part of it? If disapprobation had attached to such conduct, is it probable they would continue in their confidence, after they had heard of it, the persons who managed their concerns? or did they imagine that by trumpeting their abhorrence of this diabolical traffic, fulminating against every person implicated in it, and blazoning the virtues of those who seemed anxious to exterminate it, they would prevent their transactions from being divulged; or, if revealed, they could induce this nation to discredit any authority that might dare to give them utterance?"

There is certainly too much violence and great bad taste displayed in this language of Dr. Thorpe, which is more calculated to withdraw the reader from the important points of his statement than to fix his attention on them. The facts, however, of a *purchase* of slaves, of letting them out for hire, &c. are too peremptorily stated by Dr. Thorpe to be easily passed over by us. They are not denied by the author of the Special Report, but so met by a long train of weak inconclusive reasoning as to fail completely in impressing conviction on our minds; while Dr. Thorpe, in his reply, has, very fairly, produced several cases, upon the strength of which he had ventured to make so serious an attack; and which, if these cases were insufficient, are corroborated, as far as the question of *purchase* goes, by the indirect acknowledgment of Governor Ludlam himself.—*Sp. Rep. p. 53.*

But we certainly do not see enough to fix upon the *directors* the foul stain of participating in these acts of outrage upon the fundamental laws of their establishment. We do think it possible that they did

not know, hear of, or believe, the facts stated by Mr. Thorpe, or any part of them. We do think it probable that, knowing and disapproving of the conduct of their servants, they might still have felt extreme difficulty in applying an immediate or effectual remedy. We do even think that they *might* be justified, on the ground of necessity and good policy, in continuing persons in their official situations, who had forfeited their confidence by the commission of such acts as are here charged upon them by Dr. Thorpe. We do think that they might conscientiously trumpet forth their abhorrence of the diabolical traffic, without meaning to make their anathemas a cloak to conceal their own transactions; and, if Dr. Thorpe were to depend exclusively on these or similar insinuations, we conceive he would soon lose all credit in the contemplation of every rational and dispassionate inquirer into the circumstances of the case.

But, if Dr. Thorpe has, on his part, taken pains to implicate the *directors* in the conduct of their *servants*, the author of the

Special Report, on his part, does not appear to take much pains to separate them. He seems carefully to avoid the disjunctive, and, animated by a blind zeal, advocates, indiscriminately, the cause of master and servants, thus unnecessarily confounding the conduct of a set of selfish, profligate, worthless settlers in the colony, with that of the easy, well-meaning, disinterested part of their constituents in this country.

Still is the charge of Slave Trading made out as existing within the colony. Analogous to this is the plan of *redeeming* slaves, as it is technically called, by converting them into *indented servants*, which we must consider, notwithstanding a gloss laboriously attempted to be thrown upon the practice, as nothing less than a sly pretence for evading the conditions of the charter, and deriving all the advantages, without incurring any of the odium, attached to the name of Slavery. The following case will afford an appropriate illustration:—Two American ships, with one hundred and sixty-seven Slaves on board, were taken by

His Majesty's Ship *Derwent*, and condemned, as lawful prizes, at Sierra Leone. We cannot follow Dr. Thorpe in his invectives against Governor Ludlam. It was a novel case; he probably meant well, though, in our opinion, he acted wrong. The bare facts were these:—Forty of the ablest men were taken into the service of government, under a promise of liberty *at the end of three years*. Eighteen men, fourteen women, and ninety-five children, were bound apprentices for different terms, according to their respective ages, each person receiving apprentices paying *twenty dollars* for each. The money thus paid was distributed among the captors. The secret object of Governor Ludlam most probably was to get an increase of valuable cultivators; but, whatever were his views, we conceive the case is fairly brought, by the circumstances of it, within the definition of a purchase and sale. It is truly a Slave Trade under specious pretences, quite at variance with the professed principles of the Company; virtually illegal, wrong in practice, and mischievous as a precedent.

But this question is so well handled by Dr. Thorpe, that we should do an act of injustice to him, as well as to the subject, not to state his argument in his own words:—

“ Purchasing slaves, when practised by the Company,” says he, “ is termed ‘ *redeeming natives*’ of Africa from slavery, who were bound to the purchasers for a limited time. I know not how many of these were bound, but I was in the colony twenty years after the Company commenced and I never heard of a single individual who was liberated after serving his apprenticeship. I will examine this *redemption of the natives*, which Mr. Ludlam and Mr. M’Aulay acknowledge was a speculative error. The purchase is confessed, the slave is brought to Sierra Leone, not sent to the West Indies; for every market there must be a seller and a buyer; when the purchase is made, does it injure or benefit the market to have the merchandize carried to an adjacent or a distant part? Though school-boys would laugh at such a pitiful subterfuge, it is gravely delivered (under the sanction of great

names) as a vindication of the charge of Slave Trading;"—and again speaking of the one hundred and sixty-seven slaves captured in the American ships, by His Majesty's Ship *Derwent*, he says, " They affirm that the slaves were not sold.—I may be mistaken, but the slaves were driven to a public market, they were publicly cried for sale through Free Town, by the public crier, they were exposed at a public auction, there was a seller and a buyer, and a price paid. The article purchased was delivered, and carried away;—yet this was no sale!* Mr. Rylander, Mr. Hamilton, and Mr. Vannick, were offered some, but declared they would not buy slaves. Mrs. Forbes purchased two, and on leaving the colony she asked Governor Ludlam whether she might sell them? He answered, ' she might!' and accordingly she did sell them again, for the same price, *twenty dollars* each, which was about the price of such slaves on the adjacent rivers."

* These particulars are not stated in the account given of this transaction in the Special Report.

Mr. Ludlam, in the letter published as his, writes, (p. 53, Sp. Rep.) ‘ I do not urge all this as meaning to contend that slaves were never allowed to be purchased, or, *as I must call it, redeemed*, in this colony; but I contend these were neither purchased nor redeemed.’ “ Now, I can prove,” says Dr. Thorpe, “ by testimony of those who were present at the time, that there never was a more complete sale of slaves in the West Indies, though I cannot speak of the manner in which, according to Governor Ludlam, they purchased or redeemed slaves before in the colony. It is obvious Governor Ludlam might have distributed these slaves as he thought fit, and it is also well known that any person obtained the slaves who bid and paid for them.”

“ In the action brought by Campbell against the Company,” says Dr. Thorpe, “ tried before myself, it was proved that the Company’s servants purchased slaves, and hired them for work; that settlers brought slaves into the colony, and took them away; that slaves who fled to the colony for protection, were delivered up to

their masters, and even to slave ships. I read the notes of this trial before a Committee of the African Institution, and will publish them, if the directors desire it.

“ I have read the affidavit of Jesse Porter and Thomas Gudgeon, charging Messrs. Ludlam and Dawes with a knowledge of slaves being sold in the colony. I have also read some of the Arabic letters from the chiefs on the coast to our venerated king, charging the Company's servants with dealing in slaves.

“ The Report, in various places, admits the purchasing of natives; the working of them followed of course; they were not procured for ornament; and James Reid, on oath, stated in court that the Company hired out their slaves; that he had paid their accomptant four dollars a month for the labour of some whom he had hired himself.

“ A Mr. Cooper went into the Soosoo country, purchased eleven natives, and brought them into Sierra Leone; in his absence they were refractory to his wife, and she was allowed to send them to a

neighbouring factory to be sold!! Slaves who made their escape from neighbouring factories, were, on application, delivered up to their masters by the Governor, and even before application, they were sent to gaol until applied for; some slaves, that escaped from Bance Island, were seized, flogged, and sent back by the Governor. Slaves also, who swam to shore from slave ships in the river, were seized by the civil power in their famous Free Town, and remanded to their fetters. A noted slave captain of the name of Brown recovered some slaves, who had escaped from him, while lying in the river. Tobias, a blacksmith, now in Sierra Leone, having escaped from a slave ship, was seized by the Governor's order, and thrown into prison; but effecting his escape also from thence, he concealed himself in the mountains until his persecutors had sailed away, and he is at present in the colony, a very useful settler."—*See Thorpe's Reply, p. 24. et seq.*

These facts may appear to be accurately or inaccurately stated, according to the peculiar bias or pre-disposition of mind of

the reader. For our parts, we believe them to be substantially true, not because they are given on the authority of Dr. Thorpe, but, because we conceive these and similar cases would necessarily arise from the nature and situation of the colony, from the bad character of many of the settlers, from the imbecility of the government, from the extreme indolence of the free cultivators, whose indisposition to work is said to have been the grand impediment, which from first to last obstructed the views of the Company and of their agents with respect to the cultivation of the land, and which is stated to have been so strong, that if any other mode of subsistence, requiring less bodily exertion, could be found, the pursuit of agriculture was infallibly neglected. Hence the strong inducement to commit the transgressions enumerated by Dr. Thorpe; hence the perception of a necessity to cultivate the land by labourers, who, whether in the character of slaves or indentured servants, might be *compelled* to work; hence a clandestine Slave Trade; hence the plan of

redeeming natives, without any reference to their own free choice, from a state of slavery, by placing them in a state of servitude.

With such a glaring demonstration, furnished by their own colony, of the difficulty, not to say impossibility, of cultivating the land in these tropical climates by free labourers, what can be meant by the Directors of the African Institution, by pushing forward the project of cultivating our West India islands by free negroes; towards the accomplishment of which the clandestine Slave Trade is employed as a pretence, and the Slave Registry Bill, if ever it pass into a law, is meant to be employed as a stepping stone?

But it is time that we should revert to the proceedings of the African Institution. We have already stated the resolutions as forming the basis of their new establishment. We entirely agree with the Committee that there was nothing in the history of the Sierra Leone Company to discourage the efforts of the African Institution, while

acting on the plan proposed in their Resolutions, and stated in their First Report. They had failed in trade, and, profiting by experience, they determined not to engage in commercial speculations. They had been unsuccessful in disseminating christian knowledge, and accordingly determined not to undertake any religious missions. They also meant, no doubt, by excluding trade and religious missions from their scheme, to conciliate the good-will and meet the objections of a numerous set of persons, who might otherwise be disinclined to support the labours of the Institution. Civilization had not been much promoted by the help of languages, by arts, by agriculture, or example; yet the continued efforts to establish this vital principle, or first necessary step to human happiness, must always be deserving of praise, and might possibly be rewarded by success. They had had abundant proof, as they conceived, of the hindrance thrown by the Slave Trade in the way of every effort to better the condition of Africa, and this they determined to attack in every shape and by every con-



trivance. For this they were well qualified by experience, by opportunities of gaining information, by influence, by patronage, by the weight of money. This was the main and immediate object pointed at by their Resolutions; for by the subversion of the Slave Trade alone, it was thought, could the ultimate object of admitting the inhabitants of the great continent of Africa to the blessings of civilized life, and of redeeming it from heathen darkness, be ever expected to be effectually accomplished.

Proposing to act upon a plan so pure, so liberal, so entirely unexceptionable in principle, so noble in its end, the directors could not fail to receive the warmest support in money, in hand and in heart, of every genuine friend of the human race; nor could the voice of calumny have reached them, nor scepticism dared to call in question the rectitude of their motives, while faithfully discharging the duties of this generous, this most important, and arduous undertaking.

Up to the Fifth Annual Report, this seems to have been the exclusive object; other

points, however, are incidentally, or, as we conceive *artfully*, introduced, to lead the mind of the public easily and gradually to objects not immediately within the professed duties of the African Institution, as expressed in their resolutions. "The system of free labour (Rep. 2) being already established" (with what success and under what circumstances, we have already seen) "at Sierra Leone, the introduction of any number of negroes into that colony, whether on the footing of free labourers or as apprentices for a limited time, could be attended with none of those inconveniences which, it is alleged, would flow from it in our West India islands, and which, as the Committee understand, are deemed to be so considerable, as to make it a question whether many of the persons *already liberated* in the West Indies, under the operation of the Abolition Act, shall not be *sent back* to Sierra Leone."

Then, in Rep. 5, the case of Huggins is mentioned, a case which certainly stands in no need of the aid of misrepresentation; for a story more calculated to excite the

feelings, and to mislead the judgment could not easily be imagined. This horrid case, which we shall not defile our pages by repeating, together with that of Hodges, mentioned in Rep. 6, though glaring exceptions to the rule of practice and not less reprobated in the West Indies than they must be in every other part of the civilized world, are quoted as “*serving to exemplify the nature of the bondage into which it is the object of the Institution to prevent the negroes of Africa from being reduced.*” God knows, there is enough in the condition of slavery, in its best state, to excite our sympathy, and too much, in the established system, which calls urgently for the hand of correction. There is no need whatever of the aid of high colouring to give effect to the living picture. Not less than the directors of the African Institution have we been struck with the horrid circumstances of these cases; we have thought much, we have inquired, we have heard, we have seen, and we have no hesitation to pronounce distinctly, that, if the directors mean to hold up these cases as a

fair specimen of the general practice, or as any thing more than strong instances of individual tyranny, cruelty, and oppression, they are either disqualified by ignorance of the real state of things and of society in our West India islands for the delicate and difficult enterprizes they *now* seem determined to accomplish, or have deliberately put a false inference on the record of their proceedings.

These cases, however, such as they are, serve very appositely as a convenient link in the chain of their proceedings. "The directors (Rep. 6, p. 14) have adverted to this subject, not for the purpose of entering *at present* into any explanation of *their views upon it* but, merely that the members of the Institution may understand that it is one which occupies much of their attention." "The directors believe that the necessity of a *reform in the administration* of our West India colonies is strongly felt, not only by the public, but *by many persons connected with those islands*, who can no longer shut their eyes to the *consequences* of the system which has been established there."

We consider this as one of the most *artful* passages to be found in the Reports of the African Institution, designedly contrived to impress the belief that the planters themselves are tremblingly alive to the danger of their actual situation; and most unwarrantably attempting to make them falsify the very strongest ground upon which all respectable, humane, liberal, enlightened proprietors of West India property have invariably deprecated the interposition of strangers in the internal administration of their affairs, namely, the dread of revolution following upon the heels of reform: a dread too well justified by a contemplation of the horrors inflicted on St. Domingo by the mad measures of the French National Assembly, acting under the influence of the Amis des Noirs, and now, if any thing, kept alive, not by a consideration of the effects of their own vicious system but, by the growing influence and overt acts of the African Institution.

“ To such a length have abuses in this (Nevis) and some other West India

islands proceeded, that several intelligent planters have not scrupled to state their unqualified opinion, that a *reform in the administration* of those colonies is absolutely necessary ; and some have gone so far as to suggest plans for improvement. Among these plans is that of the establishment of a *registry* of all the slaves in *each* of the colonies in which a slave population exists ; and to the expediency of this measure the *directors* are disposed to give their most unqualified assent!" See Rep. 7, p. 16.

Now, because abuses have been committed in *the* little island of Nevis, a registry of slaves is proposed to be established in *each* of our West India colonies, without their consent, and in violation of their constitutional privileges, not, as pretended in another place, for the purpose of controuling a contraband Slave Trade, which in point of fact does not exist, but for the more determined purpose of introducing a reform into the internal system throughout our islands !

" To the latter communication (from the Bahamas) they feel particularly indebted

for some valuable hints relative to the amendment of the laws; particularly the law of evidence respecting slaves in the West Indies."—Rep. 7, p. 20.

Then comes, Rep. 8, p. 11—"The Board have still to lament the continuance of flagrant abuses in several of the West India islands. They have long been impressed with the extreme importance of the subject; and the means of removing the great evils still existing in the West India system and ameliorating the condition of those unhappy beings, who are now suffering under its weight, have long been under their serious consideration." "The directors, however, trust that, even during the present session, the attention of Parliament will be drawn to measures tending ultimately to ameliorate the state of the black and coloured population of the West India islands."

Here then is another step from the *black* population, or slaves, to that of the coloured or *free people* of the islands! Where, we would ask, is this to stop?

Then follows the recommendation of a *registry of slaves*; upon the strength of

which a bill has since been brought into Parliament by Mr. Wilberforce, and supported by the pen of Mr. Stevens.

We do not mean to enter much into the merits or demerits of this measure; they will, no doubt, be fairly tried by Parliament, and the question agitated without any degree of that intemperance which distinguishes the pamphlet of Mr. Stevens. It is enough for our purpose, in this place, to have traced the indirect object of it through the unauthorized proceedings of the directors of the African Institution; and to have drawn the attention of the mass of subscribers of that establishment to a measure, which tends to implicate them in a dreadful responsibility, and to throw a most inordinate degree of power into the hands of a certain class of individuals, who have been, and now are equally, the leading members of the Sierra Leone Company, the Church Missionary Society, and the African Institution.

Each of these Associations has, we are ready to acknowledge, conferred by its labours very important benefits on mankind

in various ways. We have no desire to quarrel with, or to call in question, the purity of their motives; but we do not wish to see them intrusted with too much *power*. They have glaringly mismanaged their own affairs at Sierra Leone; they have ascertained, by experiment, that the soil in tropical climates is not to be cultivated by free labourers; civilization has made but feeble progress under their encouragement; their speculations have been followed by bankruptcy and disappointment. Are these then fit persons to be allowed to meddle with the legitimate authorities of our prosperous possessions in the West Indies? Most assuredly not. As little are East India directors and merchants trading to the coast of Africa, fit persons to direct the affairs of these rival colonies, with a view to their happiness and prosperity. As to moral and religious instruction, surely the Bishop of London, and the regular clergy, acting under his authority, are the fittest persons to discharge these important duties. Our colonial assemblies, and particularly that of Jamai-

ca, have invariably presented a firm resistance to the encroaching spirit of Methodists and Seceders, and we trust they never will fail, within the limits of their jurisdiction, to support the established hierarchy of the mother country, in spite of every menace, and in the face of every danger. And as the "good humoured and complying" temper of our ministers seem to have encouraged the directors of the African Institution to believe that "*Government,*" to employ the words of the Secretary of this Institution, "*will be disposed to adopt almost any plan which we may propose to them with respect to Africa, provided we save them the trouble of thinking,*" let them now be disabused and made at last to understand that such is not the case with respect to our West India islands, notwithstanding the phalanx which may be brought to support their enterprises on all occasions.

But, though we have trespassed too long on the patience of our readers, we cannot altogether pass by the Registry Bill and Mr. Stevens' pamphlet without some short observations. They afford, indeed, a subject

most important and deserving of very serious consideration in a commercial, moral, and constitutional point of view, as affecting the prosperity of our sugar islands; the *true* happiness of a large body of fellow-creatures, who may be benefited or made miserable by the operation of the measure, and the growing influence of a club or association of persons out of Parliament over the proceedings of the legislative bodies of the kingdom.

The consideration of these questions would evidently lead us into too wide a field. Nor shall we stop to consider the question of the *right* of Parliament to enact laws for the internal regulation of our several colonies in cases where they have, from the earliest periods, enjoyed the exclusive privilege of legislating for themselves. It is enough to admit that Parliament has the *power*, to leave ourselves free to consider merely the *wisdom*, of making a beginning of this sort of interference in the case before us.

All travellers describe their surprize at first landing in the new world. Humbolt

speaks of this in a very lively manner. The imagination is left far behind, when the strange and agreeable appearance of every object strikes upon the senses. Every thing is new; every creature, every shrub, the formation of the mountains, and the meanest reptile, convey the idea of a separate creation. No words can give an adequate representation of the actual appearance and state of things. Nature, in these regions, delights in extremes. The heat of the sun is intense; if it rain, the drops fall down in masses, and, forming torrents, rush impetuously from the mountains, and, alas! too frequently, sweep away every thing before them. Throughout there is a degree of combustibility which requires the most careful watchfulness; the smallest spark is immediately kindled into a flame; the flame, fanned by the never-failing breeze, soon rages uncontrolled, and every fabric within its reach is soon levelled with the dust. This is no exaggerated picture; it is the natural state of things, and the artificial will necessarily be influenced by it; the mind, the passions, the senses, the regulations of

society, the wants, the abundance, and all the various circumstances attending the animated part, acknowledge the peculiar structure and features of the material part of the creation in this new hemisphere. To Europeans the whole *thing* is inconceivable; and if this consideration affords a lesson of caution to legislators how they begin, it will at the same time teach them how difficult it is to know where to stop, the work of making laws for the regulation of these distant regions of the world.

The West India Islands are charged with raising obstructions in the way of manumission. Now we have always understood, and still we have no reason to disbelieve, that the laws, of which complaint is made as intending to obstruct the progress of emancipation, were merely meant as measures of police, calculated to meet the too common practice of conferring freedom upon slaves, who, from disease or old age, might no longer be fit for labour, and at the same time afford a simple and rational substitute for that code of poor laws, which do no credit to the municipal

regulations of this country. In Jamaica, the law, *passed in 1792*,* directs that, in all cases of manumission, security shall be given, *not in money*, (a circumstance which affects the whole feature and character of the transaction) *but in bond* to the church-wardens of the parish, to prevent the person so enfranchised from becoming a charge upon the public; a regulation not likely, *even in theory*, to obstruct the liberation of *well-conditioned* slaves, nor to produce any worse effect than that intended by the law, namely, that of rescuing the unwilling victim from the miseries of a most unsuitable and merciless sort of emancipation.

We have no access to the laws, nor are we well-informed of the usages, of the Windward and Leeward Islands; but of Jamaica, which, in extent, in population, in productiveness, and commercial importance, is equal to all the other islands put together, and from whence, if from any partial source, might *data* be more fairly drawn than from smaller communities

* The earliest law to the same effect, of which we can find a trace, was passed in 1774.

as the bases of *general* regulation, we can speak with confidence. There the penalty of the bond is £100, and the condition required that of the payment of £5 annually, in case of need, to the enfranchised negro. We have heard from good authority, and we believe, that never but in one instance has a bond of this description been enforced, and that in a case so evidently influenced by improper feeling, as to call forth general disapprobation: such, *in point of practice*, has been the obstruction thrown by the laws of that island in the way of the manumission of slaves.

The Island of Jamaica, if not the whole West India body, has a right to complain of being stabbed in the dark, by mistake or design. A little fair inquiry or dispassionate consideration would have let in light upon the subject, and either have given strength to the reasonings employed to recommend the measure, or prevented the appeal now made to the wisdom of Parliament to enforce it. No concealment, we trust, could have been deliberately meant; for concealment of truth in such a

case assumes nothing less than the character of falsehood. We leave the West India body to give vent to their indignant feelings in their own way, and according to the extent of their wrongs, confining ourselves merely to point out a gross misstatement as a very unfit ground of parliamentary interposition.

The indirect object of this measure is to counteract the imputed narrow policy of the several islands by helping the progress of freedom. Whoever is not registered is to be free, as if freedom *abstractedly* were a blessing. Who will fail to register his active, healthy, intelligent, valuable slave? Surely no person can be expected to commit such an act of negligence or disinterestedness, at least under the operation of this law; but there are many individuals who would gladly seize the opportunity of enfranchising sickly, decrepit, aged, worthless slaves, to escape the expense which, not the voice of charity but, the laws of the islands have hitherto compelled them to incur for the cloathing and proper maintenance of such poor creatures.

But this is not all. The principal towns, particularly in Jamaica, abound with respectable well-disposed negroes, who, without the *right* to freedom, enjoy all the advantages of it through the partiality and indulgence of their owners. The freedom of these people is perhaps never called in question, except in cases of misconduct, or to aid the valuable purposes of police. This bill, if it pass into a law, will have the effect of calling it, in many cases, into question. It will cut both ways, and be equally the evidence of slavery and of freedom. Many persons will now record their right of property in the slave, whom otherwise they might never think of claiming, some from selfish considerations, some from duty as mortgagors, as tenants for life, &c. and thus may the slave be made to descend in the line of inheritance to the heir, and again be subjected to all the vicissitudes attending the temper, the character, and circumstances of the owner for the time being, when, without the registry, he might be left gradually to slide into a state of ease, security, and established freedom.

But it seems a registry is necessary because the *colour of the skin* is, *primâ facie*, evidence of the condition of the negro; and thus, by the laws of these colonies, the *onus probandi* is thrown upon the *black*, which might be thought, if we were to yield to the authority of this writer, to be nearly as difficult as to wash off the colour of his skin. As the passage is curious, it will find a fit place in this section of our observations:—

“ The assemblies have wonderfully improved upon the slave code of all other countries and times. They have absolved the master from the troublesome duty of proving his title. They have reversed the universal presumption of other laws; placing it, not in favour of freedom, but against it. They have cast the burthen of proof on the weakest and helpless party. The English lord, when trying the question of villainage with his alleged villain or slave, was obliged even to bring into court the near relations of his opponent to prove the hereditary condition. The West India master need produce only the alleged slave him-

self. *His condition is recorded on his face.*"
See Reasons for a Slave Registry, p. 58.

His condition, we are assured, is enregistered indelibly on the public records of the islands, which records afford the strongest and best evidence that can be produced of the condition of the negro.

Who would not conclude, from the foregoing quotation, that the question of free or not free is constantly agitated in the courts of law, for the barbarous purpose of disturbing the ease and happiness of unoffending characters. That this is not true, no one, we think, who has ever been in the islands, and has witnessed the contentedness of that happy class of persons, can for a moment entertain a doubt. It is most assuredly, however, a fit subject to be fairly inquired into, when doubtful characters step forward to disturb the public peace, or in any way violate the laws of the country. Are not vagrants in this very metropolis constantly apprehended and sent to the house of correction, till they give a good account of themselves? Is not the *onus probandi*, in these cases,

invariably thrown upon them? Are the West India islands alone to forego the benefit of a strict police? and is the lowest order of persons only to be embraced by this new measure? To every unoffending negro it is useless; to every free man it is unnecessary. His title to freedom stands on the basis of a rock. It stands upon the same security as property in land, as mortgages, leases, wills, marriage settlements, &c. They are all equally enrolled in the books of record; which afford the strongest evidence that can be produced in law. Who, in the face of such conclusive evidence, could be so mad as to attempt to disturb the claim to liberty of any human being?

Not to multiply objections, we have stated enough to point out with what absurdities and culpable inconsideration, to use the mildest terms, the promoters of this project are chargeable. To say nothing of the absurdity of making laws to prevent a clandestine Slave Trade, which, in point of fact, does not exist, and of the solecism in legislation of making laws to meet

offences *in futuro*, which, from the nature of things, as we could easily shew, are not likely to happen, the striking absurdity is at once committed of proposing to begin the work of emancipation at the wrong end. Many of that description of persons, who ought to be made free, will be fixed in a state of slavery; and many of an opposite description will be enfranchised, to whom freedom will be tantamount to misery, while the *important* reform is accomplished of making the silence of the proposed registry, instead of the written document of a public record, the legal evidence in all cases of disputed freedom!

These considerations afford, according to our apprehensions, the strongest possible grounds of objection to the measure; objection so evident that we should have been surprized at seeing them overlooked, if we had not had occasion, more than once, to observe how much the opinions of this organ of the African Institution are liable to be led astray by the delusions of a very heated imagination; and if we were not, at the same time, very strongly

impressed with a belief of the existence of designs in some directors of that distinguished Association, very distinct from, and very far beyond, the professed and prominent object of their public recommendations.

To us every measure professing to better the condition of the black population of our colonies, invariably excites a peculiar interest, and carries along with it an irresistible charm; we are instinctively drawn to lend a hand to the cause of humanity and mercy, and ever must feel a severe pang of regret when we are stopped by prudential considerations, or disapprobation of the means employed by our fellow-labourers for the accomplishment of this important object. These should always be *unequivocally* right. No trick, no sophistry, no double meanings can be tolerated in any shape; these serve only to stagger confidence, to engender suspicion, to chill the warmth of zeal, and disappoint expectation. It is no easy thing to follow this writer through all his windings. We are required to encounter the subtilties

without the precision of special pleading. Already have we pointed out a striking instance of misrepresentation in a preceding paragraph. We now proceed with unwilling steps to notice another no less exceptionable passage of this pamphlet:—

“ As it is impossible suddenly to break their fetters without danger of calamitous consequences, not only to their masters, but themselves, *we* must suffer them to remain, for some considerable period, in their present bondage.” “ But who is there so dead to the impulse of human sympathy, who so regardless of the claims of justice and mercy, as not to deplore that cruel necessity, and to desire to give to its duration the narrowest limits that humanity will allow?

“ Here there neither is, nor ever has been any controversy in Parliament since the subject was first brought to its notice. *All* have professed to regard colonial slavery as an evil we were *bound to terminate*, though the nature of the case would not permit us to do so in any but a slowly progressive course.

“The advocates of the abolition, and *the few who refused to prescribe any term to the Slave Trade*, professed themselves to be as earnest in their desire of reform, by all safe means, and *ultimately to abolish the slavery* of our colonies, as Mr. Wilberforce himself.”

“The speeches of eminent statesmen, *the writings of the colonial party*, the votes and addresses of Parliament, and the official correspondence of ministers with the colonial governors, might all be appealed to in proof that such has *always* been the unanimity of sentiment on this very interesting head.

“What are the means then that can be devised for the attainment of a reformation so dear to the wishes and so necessary to the honour of our country?

“They can only be of two general kinds; compulsory and persuasive. Regarding the end as one which *Parliament is bound*, in some way, to attain, it must either be accomplished by direct legislation accompanied with coercive sanctions, or by such parliamentary measures as may incline

those, who have the power of ameliorating the lot of the slaves, to engage willingly in that beneficent work."

There is a sort of mist hanging over this passage, together with the preceding and following paragraphs, which makes it difficult to define the exact meaning of the writer. It however insinuates, that the question of emancipation had already been entertained by Parliament, that Parliament *is bound* sooner or later to accomplish the object by direct or indirect legislative enactments; that even the friends of slavery were *equally* earnest as *Mr. Wilberforce* in their *desire ultimately to abolish* the slavery of our colonies; that the writings of the colonial party bore testimony of the unanimity of sentiment, on this head, and that *all* professed to regard colonial slavery as an evil which we were *bound* to terminate.

Certainly it was no easy matter to discuss the question of the Slave Trade, without touching *incidentally* on the point of eventual, though very distant, emancipation. But who can say that this point was ever

brought before Parliament in a direct tangible shape, or was so received under any form as to leave an *obligation* on Parliament to entertain it at any definite or indefinite period of time?

The abolition of villainage in this country was the work of centuries. With such a precedent in view, no rational being could ever doubt that the abolition of the Slave Trade would eventually, and in a progressive manner, though not perhaps by the same slow degrees lead to the abolition of colonial slavery; as little might he doubt that effect would follow its cause, as deny in any shape this almost self-evident proposition. This sentiment must have passed through the mind of every member of the House of Commons, and of every member of the House of Peers, without perhaps one single exception. But are we thence to infer that Parliament is *bound* to accomplish, or even hasten the effect *by legislative interposition*? If the premises then are insufficient to bear out the inference, where is the vote of the House of Commons or of the House of Peers to be found to

establish the proposition that Parliament is *bound* to interference? A simple reference to the rolls of Parliament may be sufficient to corroborate or to falsify this preposterous insinuation.

As to the writers of the colonial party, they could not have failed to see, like all other persons, that the Act for abolishing the Slave Trade would naturally lead, by safe, slow, and almost imperceptible steps, to the *ultimate* abolition of colonial slavery. If their writings are meant to be brought in proof of unanimity of sentiment on this point, the averment admits of no contradiction. If the same writers are pointed to as professing to regard colonial slavery as an evil which *Parliament* was *bound* to terminate, we are called upon, for want of chapter and page, to oppose a simple denial to the truth of this assertion on the single ground, that no writers could be found sufficiently absurd to commit this act of *felo de se*, or at the best to stultify themselves in the face of the recorded opinions of their more rational opponents.

Let us see what was written, at the time these discussions occupied almost unceasingly the attention of Parliament, by an enlightened, zealous, and practically useful member of the illustrious corps of abolitionists, since become a director of the African Institution: *—

“ No one is senseless enough to propose that the colonies should be cultivated by Europeans, or that the slaves already settled there should be emancipated.”—*Concise Statement*, &c. p. 42.

“ If this grand reformation (the abolition of the Slave Trade) is once adopted, there needs *no further interference* with the structure of colonial society, or the concerns of West India proprietors. Every man may now be left to pursue his own interest in his own way. Few will continue so insane as to mal-treat and work out their stock, when they can no longer fill up the blanks occasioned by their cruelty, or their inhuman and short-sighted policy.”—“ In a very few years all the negroes in the West

* Said to be Mr. Brougham.

India islands will be creoles, and all the masters will treat them with indulgence for their own sakes. The enormous expense of new supplies will be entirely saved, the increase of negroes by breeding will, on each estate, be in proportion to the accumulation of the proprietor's capital; the labour of the whole negroes will be much more productive, and will, in some degree, resemble the industry of freemen; the negro character will be improved; the manner of the other classes will also be ameliorated; the non-residence, so much lamented at present, and the want of women, so fatal to the colonial character, will gradually wear out; the structure of West Indian society will more and more resemble that of the compact, firm, and respectable communities which compose the North American states."—*Ib.* p. 60.

Let us see again what is now said, we believe, by the same writer. "The emancipation of these unfortunate beings has *never* formed any part of the views entertained by the abolitionists. They have constantly been charged with indulging in

such prospects; they have uniformly, peremptorily, and, in the end, successfully, repelled the charge, not that any one, attached to the cause of humanity and justice, ever shut his eyes to the ultimate liberty of the negro race, *as the result of an improved system of management*; or ever saw, without infinite pain, the *impossibility of hastening* so desirable a consummation by *direct legislative interference*.”—“A gradual improvement in their condition could alone prepare the way for restoring them to liberty; and this improvement was confidently expected to flow from the abolition of the Slave Trade.”—*Edin. Review*, Oct. 1815, p. 317.

These observations, it is true, afford no argument against the *bare* project of registering the slaves; but this completely falsifies the reasonings and the statements employed to recommend it; while the train of reflection naturally arising in the mind of the author of the “*Concise Statement*” presents so simple, so obvious, so well-considered and interesting a description of the certain progress of future improvement

in the condition of the negro slaves, and delineates so well the beautiful methods and delicate springs set at work by the Creator of the Universe to perfect his moral works in every part of this sublunary world, that we are irresistibly led to deprecate that stretch of human wisdom, which would attempt, under any pretence, to accomplish his purpose by this unnecessary piece of machinery, which, with all the appearance of simplicity, contains, like Pandora's box, the principles of immeasurable mischief.

If we were called upon to name the time when improvement in the internal affairs of our colonies is most likely to take a start, we should immediately and confidently name the present moment, when the well-grounded hope, or the actual possession of wealth by the master, will naturally cause a re-action upon the comfort and personal condition of the slave. What mortgagor has not some faithful servant whom he would be glad, if he had the liberty, to remunerate by the blessings of enfranchisement for valuable services? How many humane individuals are

there, whose "poverty, not whose will, consents" to keep some deserving negro in a state of bondage? Independent of subordinate considerations, the growth of freedom is thus obviously an effect, which, if it be not impeded by the overflowing zeal and superabundant light of its most conspicuous, though not its most rational advocates, must naturally follow the growth of prosperity and fortune. It is easy to perceive what important advantages will almost unavoidably be conferred on this interesting class of human beings by the undisturbed operation of this simple cause. Will not moral, religious, and intellectual improvement immediately follow, if they do not precede, this movement in the progressive change? Will not these again have an influence collaterally upon others, and thus prepare them, in their turn, for admission to a new condition, which, under present circumstances, they might not be qualified to partake of?

If, on the other hand, we were called upon to state the most powerfully counteracting causes, we should not hesitate,

among others, to place foremost this most daring conspiracy, if it ever become ripened into the shape of law, against the constitutional privileges of the West India islands; under the security of which crowds of valuable subjects have embarked their lives, their families, their properties, their all. It appears to us to be nothing less than an act of perfidy. It is in direct opposition to the professions held out by the abolitionists during the whole progress of the discussions in Parliament on the important subject of the Slave Trade. It must stagger all confidence. Who will toil on to raise or to preserve a valuable inheritance for his children, if the fruits of his labour are to be exposed to danger at the moment of expected enjoyment? Will he not immediately recur to the old, and, we should hope, nearly exploded, system of making large crops upon terms only exceptionable on the ground of wear and tear of capital? Is it possible that this measure can fail to exasperate the mind of the colonist to the highest pitch of indignation? and will exasperation and the influence of avarice

united in the mind of the master have a tendency to better the condition of the slave?

We could carry on this train of reflection to an indefinite length, but we have already said enough to shew the extreme folly and absurdity, not to say practical wickedness, of this project: of which the principle and the probable operation stand at variance with each other, and of which the immediate effect will be to obstruct the very best avenues for promoting the substantial happiness, and the lasting benefit of the negro population in the British colonies.

From beginning to end of this pamphlet there is nothing like fair play. If atrocities are committed in one little island, the reproach, justly attaching to such atrocious acts, is most unjustly fastened upon the whole West India body; the exception is industriously swollen into all the importance of the rule, and a thesis taken for the most ill-founded, not to say defamatory, declamation. A law is passed in one or more islands, by which every person manumit-

ting a slave is required to pay a certain sum of money to secure the future maintenance of such slave. This law may be founded on good, or on doubtful, or even on bad principles of legislation. Such, however, as it is, it has been discussed in the colonial assemblies, has been approved of by the Governor, and ratified by the King in council. We cannot at this distance undertake to answer for the motives of the framers of such laws in the different islands; no more than we would for the motives of those who undertake to condemn them here; but we have stated that in Jamaica, it is in practice a well-judged, benevolent measure of police. No inquiry is made, by this writer, whether the security is given in money or in bond; the *object* of all these laws is broadly stated to be, *wilful impediment in the way of manumissions*; and immediately a violent *tirade* is levelled against the whole of the colonial assemblies without any discrimination whatever. To pass over a great deal of rank abuse, one unvaried tone of harshness is observable throughout; every idea is tor-

tured to swell the current of popular odium against the system condemned, as if victory, and not the discovery of truth, were the object aimed at; nowhere is a guarded expression to be found to leave room for a possible inference that, with returning prosperity to the planter, some advantages may have accrued to the slave, some increase of kindness, more attention to his ease and comfort both in cloathing and subsistence, some relaxation in point of labour, some modification of the severer parts of plantation duty, and above all an almost entire exemption from the operation of that disgraceful law which directs slaves to be taken up and sold under legal process for the payment of debts and taxes.*

* We are credibly informed that, in Jamaica, it is now become a rare occurrence to see slaves, thus levied on, exposed to sale; an indisputable proof of the growing prosperity of the planter, and, in one most important particular, of a corresponding amelioration in the condition of the slave. What effect may be partially produced by the dreadful calamity lately inflicted on this island, we need not undertake to say; but we can easily understand that a grant of money, afforded by Parliament to the unfortunate sufferers, would produce a more salutary effect towards the comfort and condition of a large body of slaves than is likely to be worked out by the present or future labours of the African Institution.

To say that no changes have taken place, that improvement in the condition of slaves has not *latterly* been gradually going forward, particularly in the island of Jamaica, is positively *false*, and must be known to be false by every person who has taken pains to ascertain the real state of things from unprejudiced authority. That improvements have not kept pace with the spirit of the times is a *truism*, which no fair observer can conscientiously deny, and which must be equally the subject of regret to every genuine philanthropist, and to every denomination or sect of christians.

But though it may be a subject of regret, it cannot altogether be that of surprise. It is now nearly eight years since the law for abolishing the Slave Trade was carried into complete effect. During the first four years of that time, the restrictions put by Bonaparte upon the trade for colonial produce, had reduced the West India planters to a state bordering upon ruin. During the remaining four years indeed the sugar distillery bill and the return of peace to Europe, had gilded his prospects, and

disclosed the dawn of more prosperous fortunes. Yet even here some check has been experienced; for in the course of these years, Jamaica had been visited by an hurricane, St. Vincent and Barbadoes, in different ways, by an eruption from a volcano, and the whole of the islands, more or less, by famine, following the steps of the American war; for which the slave and the slave-holder may with reason think he is indebted to the ready pen of the author of "War in Disguise," and of the "Reasons for establishing a Registry of Slaves in the British Colonies."

The clandestine Slave Trade, we have said, is a mere pretence; and the Slave Registry Bill, if it pass into a law, is intended to be made a stepping-stone for ulterior measures of the African Institution and Church Missionary Society. Else why attack the colonial assemblies for not passing laws to attach the negroes to the soil; for not repealing certain laws which direct the slave to be sold for the debt of the master: for "opposing positive prohibitions to *the only attainable means of religi-*

ous instruction and worship," namely, by missionary preachers? However important these points may be, as questions of colonial regulation, what have they to do with the Slave Registry Bill? or how can they be tortured into reasons for establishing a registry of slaves in the British colonies? The first lies, in some degree, within the reach of certain established authorities in this country; the second, we trust, will soon become obsolete, through disuse; and the last is distinctly within the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Bishop of London. The most important of these objects might be accomplished without encroaching upon a single constitutional right, or claim to right, of any of the islands. But—this is not enough, nor would it suit the views of the leading directors of the African Institution. A precedent must be established by Act of Parliament for interfering in the internal regulations of these islands; the colonial system must be subverted; and the way laid open for the future enterprises of these theologico-political associations.

There is a set of people in this country

who, possessed of an unbounded good opinion of themselves, conceive that nothing can be wrong which they think or do, and nothing can be right which is thought or done by others. Pretending to be the advocates of universal toleration, they are themselves most intolerant ; with them proselytism is a fixed principle of duty ; for this there are no lengths to which they will not go ; with unceasing perseverance, and not very scrupulous as to means, they are daily adding to the number and power of their sect ; we find them meddling with the concerns of the cabinets of kings, and establishing their influence by disturbing the tranquillity of private life. To hear these persons talk, one might be led to suppose that benevolence and commiseration for the sufferings of others dwelt exclusively with them ; in the same breath they preach up mercy towards the sable sons of Africa, and give the signal to “ let loose the dogs of war ” against the fairest regions of Europe. Tracing the successful progress of their schemes to the operation of *influences*, which lie beyond the compre-

hension of common understandings, they treat with contempt, and trample without mercy on, the dearest interests of those who happen to hold opposite opinions to their own. Whatever their ultimate object may be, it rivets their whole attention; no prudential considerations interpose to check, no experience can instruct, no warning voice can reach them. Always encroaching by day-light and by stealth, where, we would ask, do they mean to stop?—We have no hesitation to say that, without they are stopped by the wisdom of Parliament at this point, they never will stop, until they have raised Barbarism on the wreck of civilized life in the West India islands, and Fanaticism upon that of the established Hierarchy of the British empire.

FINIS.



